DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 027 804 FL 001 269

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The Use of Behavioral Objectives in Foreign Language Teaching.

Arizona Univ., Tucson. Dept. of Romance Languages.
Pub Date Jan 69
Note-8p.
Journal Cit-Forum; v16 n2 p3-10 Jan 1969
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50
Descriptors-Audiolingual Skills, *Behavioral Objectives, Behavior Patterns, Cognitive Measurement, Course Content, *Course Objectives, Educational Innovation, *Evaluation Criteria, Evaluation Needs, *Instructional Improvement, *Language Instruction, Language Tests, Measurement Goals, Modern Languages, Student Behavior

The great difficulty encountered with most behavioral educational objectives is determining whether or not they have been achieved. The disparity between new methods and most evaluation practices tends to minimize solid learning achievement. In order to specify realistic objectives that will prove meaningful in measuring student behavior as an indication of successful learning, educators must train themselves to think in terms of criteria that can apply either to observed behavior or to the verifiable product of behavior. In the field of foreign language instruction, the problem manifests itself in the movement of the teachers, in varying degrees, from inventory toward transaction teaching methods in which the chief learning objective is "unstudied" fluency in speaking. However, the limited but clear-cut specifications of this objective afford an opportunity for the systematic, continuous readjustment of the means necessary to attain it. Course content revision is nonetheless, but a beginning in the reform battle for a relevant curriculum to accommodate the demands for individualized instruction. (CW)

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ED 027804

From: Forum. Volume 16, Number 2, January 1969.

THE USE OF BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Perhaps you too have observed in your experience that a person seems to reach a point in life, sooner or later, where change loses its excitement and becomes an open sore--an irritation to be endured without enthusiasm and without much pretense of resignation. When this point is reached, almost any little thing beyond daily habit seems to demand superhuman exertion. We hope that this will happen to us later rather than sooner, but many of us might well feel rubbed raw by changes and threats of change that have faced and are facing us still in our time. That would certainly be understandable.

I am convinced that we are nowhere near the end of the school reform movement that has been going on for the past two decades. Foreign language instruction used to figure prominently in the movement. It doesn't appear in the forefront any more. But with something like a national assessment of foreign language teaching, completed by John B. Carroll ("Foreign Language Proficiency Levels Attained by Language Majors Near Graduation from College," Foreign Language Annals, I:2, 131-151), we may expect renewed interest in and public scrutiny of our business. It is unlikely that those in the foreign language field will remain for long uninvolved in the behavioral sciences. Certainly, the first set of changes--newer methods for the teaching of foreign language--was hardly the end. On-going and accelerating change has effectively prevented and prohibited any new kind of orthodoxy that might serve as a resting point. I think we must be prepared for change of a rather radical nature, not only in the programing, but also and perhaps chiefly in the organization of foreign language instruction.

In every age, creative and courageous adaptation to change has been a problem of major proportions. Incredibly accelerated change makes this even more true today. Procedures by which any practice is adjusted to change lag woefully. In some areas, notably medicine and military science, lagtime is minimized by the sense of crisis that surrounds them. In these areas, society and individuals have been willing to pay the price of securing speedy adaptation to new ways and structures. In education, however, precise and planned change has been counteracted by resistant forces and by difficulties of measurement and evaluation.

I feel certain that accelerating change will be with us for the remainder of our professional lives. We must find a way to cope with it. Our professional responsibility is not to stop change or to stampede it, but to manage it. A positive attitude toward change--an acceptance of its normality and desirability--appears requisite to its effective management.

My purpose is to try to explain what I see as the hope and promise in the use of behavioral objectives, not to solve the problems created by change, but to provide rational direction and management in the flow and eddy of change. Actually, I don't think we want solutions right now. Solutions are conclusive, or pretend to be. We might better wait for them until most facets of current change are in better perspective. Even then solutions may be very suspect.

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Behavioral objectives, I propose, may be a relatively simple and extremely useful procedure for achieving a consistent, rational management of change.

The prominence of behavioral objectives in today's educational thinking is probably a corollary of the shift from inventory to transaction learning which has been characteristic of the thrust of content revision in the current school reform movement. Let me dwell on the difference between them, since it explains why a need has been felt for such things as behavioral objectives.

Inventory learning, as the name suggests, is an accumulation of knowledge, stored in neat packages in the mind. Procedurally, it is a systematic attack on subject matter: rules, facts, words, nouns, declensions, conjugations, etc.

Transaction learning, on the other hand, is a communicative process of activizing the learning of subject matter. It involves persons and things reciprocally affecting and influencing one another. It stresses discovery and the internalization of knowledge as habit.

An example might be the difference between reading a play to learn some facts for discussion (inventory learning) and reading a play to perform it (transaction learning). In the first instance, the outcome is that the learner can talk intelligently about the play. In the second instance, the outcome is that the learner can talk the play and live it as one of the characters. Quite a different kind of learning takes place in each case. Each is valuable in its own way, but differently; and each is not necessarily equally valuable to any given learner.

In an inventory approach, the reader does not usually interact profoundly with the play itself. He could, but it is not expected. Even if he wanted to, there isn't time for that. He is required to read a number of plays in quick succession. He can only make a mental inventory of significant details about which he can later give an accurate account.

In a transaction, if he is to achieve his objectives, the reader is required to project himself into the play, its characterizations and dramatics, and to interact profoundly, emotionally and psychologically, with his fellow-readers. This complex of interactions demands lots of time and empathy. The transaction learner may spend an entire semester on just one play and complain that he needs more time. In spite of all this deep involvement, he may know relatively little about the details which form the inventory of the other learner, but this would be useless information for his purposes. He wants to play a role, interpret a character, project a mood.

As the school reform movement has spread and has worked far-reaching changes in materials and methods, inventory learning has tended to appear less and less relevant, at least for the vast majority of learners. There are several reasons for this. First of all, the knowledge explosion has made it manifestly impossible for any one person to master all or any significant part of all knowledge. The amassing of knowledge for its own sake seems a futile business. Secondly, great bodies of facts of a few years ago are now considered myths. People are therefore understandably cynical about the validity of many of today's facts. Thirdly, the erratic

pattern of the usefulness of specific skills and fact-knowledge makes it unwise to decide prematurely which skills to develop and which segments of fact-knowledge to amass.

As educators, we are in the business of husbanding scarce resources to attain educational goals. It appears much more sensible, given the scarcity of time, money, energy, aptitude, and intelligence, to help the individual student master important strategies of learning than to force him to amass quantities of information. Armed with significant strategies of learning, the individual can, on his own initiative, master whatever skills or knowledge may be required later in life by conditions unpredictable when he was going to school. This is, in part, the rationale behind the shift from inventory to transaction learning.

Now, one would expect a drama survey course to be an inventory by its very nature. And one would expect a dramatics course to be a transaction. Foreign language, however, is being taught variously--as an inventory, a transaction, or as one of a variety of mixes of these. The outcomes are not and cannot be identical.

When foreign language is taught as inventory, there is very little problem in measuring student achievement of objectives. In class activities, the student is taught to conjugate verbs, decline nouns, translate, write answers to questions, etc. In evaluation, he is required to write verb conjugations, noun declensions, translations, answers to questions, etc. The teacher identifies precisely what student behavior he is trying to induce, and the student generally has little excuse for not knowing exactly what he must do to be successful in the teacher's eyes. There is, in other words, a perfect congruence of learning activities and objectives. As long as evaluation is kept consistent within the system, little need may be perceived for a clearer specification of objectives. Let's suppose, however, that in the evaluation, the learner is required to understand speech that he has never really heard before, or to speak in a language which he has never really spoken before. There would be universal failure and a great demand that learning activities be brought into line with objectives.

The problem today is that foreign language teachers have moved in varying degrees from inventory teaching toward transaction. Learners are subjected, therefore, to varying mixes of inventory and transaction learning at any given level, but most crucially from one level to another. It can occur that learning activities, superficially transactional, are neutralized by evaluations of an exclusively inventory nature. Learners fail to recognize that they should be developing versatile communicative skills when their performance in communication is rarely or ineffectually evaluated. Understandably, they will direct their time and energy to the mastery of matters with pay-off value: rules, vocabulary lists, declensions, conjugations, and whatever else figures strongly in the teacher's evaluative procedures. Thus there can develop a wide disparity between the apparent learning activities and the actual learning outcomes. In addition to subverting presumed objectives, the disparity frequently minimizes solid learner achievement. Confusion between methods and evaluation leads to disappointment for both the learner and the teacher.

In a period of change in which there is widespread confusion and indecision concerning means and ends, an unmistakable specification of objectives in terms that can be verified through observation would seem to be advantageous to both learners and teachers. Since there is an ever-present danger of not arriving where one thinks one is going, objectives, like road maps, would seem to be indispensable.

We are familiar with objectives expressed as long-range goals, short-range goals, and procedures. The claim is made today that these are not equal to the task at hand. Specifically, the great difficulty with most traditional educational objectives is determining whether or not they have been achieved. This being so, it is not certain sometimes that they can be achieved. Such objectives exist pretty much as articles of faith and hope. We feel they are being achieved, or we suspect they are not being achieved, but we can't prove it.

Here, for example, is one that appears as a long-range goal of most foreign language departments: to instill in the student respect for and understanding of the beliefs, opinions, and customs of the nations and peoples whose languages are being studied. There is no workable way of determining whether or not a language program is reaching this goal as written. Evidence is simply too elusive. The very ultimate in arriving at a measurement of this goal would involve the performance of individuals when they get out among the foreign people, meeting critical situations in which their knowledge will be important in helping them solve their problems. More modestly, the goal might be measured by evidence of an increase of openness and ability to understand other points of view revealed on an attitude scale. The objective would have to be stated, however, in these more realistic terms, if behavior were to be subjected to observation.

Short-range goals expressed today call for the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Everyone must understand that there will be limits to the development of these skills because of time and other factors. Why, then, don't we specify what those limits are and how performance will be evaluated for success?

Procedures are valuable. Without them a teacher may be guilty of poor pacing, time-wasting, and a host of other malpractices. But procedural objectives tell us only what the teacher will do, not what the student is to do.

In other words, in stipulating educational objectives, we are in the habit of making certain mistakes which render them useless as measures of learning. We are in the habit of stating objectives in broad, ambitious terms with no specific reference to observable student behavior. We are in the habit of stating objectives in terms of content rather than in terms of what the student is able to do. And we are in the habit of stating objectives in terms of what the teacher is to do, not what the student is to do.

To specify objectives which will be useful in measuring student behavior as an indication of successful learning, we must train ourselves to think in terms of answers to three questions: 1) What must the learner do to prove that he has learned what I expect him to learn? 2) What conditions may I reasonably impose upon his performance--restrictions, inclusions, exclusions, concessions, circumstances, etc.? 3) How will I recognize success or failure?

It is important to remember that these criteria apply either to observed behavior itself: the act of speaking, the act of writing, the act of listening and answering or rejoining, etc.; or to the verifiable product of behavior: that which is spoken, that which is written, that which is read aloud, that which is answered or rejoined orally or in writing, that which is checked or drawn in response to command or other stimulus, etc.

The acts that are commonly performed in grammar-translation testing may be easily restated as behavioral objectives. For example:

Behavior: The student will write...

Complement: ...an acceptable translation of any moderately difficult passage of one page in length, excluding material of a technical or abstract nature, excluding unusual structure and vocabulary, but including structure and vocabulary of common occurrence...

Conditions: ...with the aid of a dictionary and within a time limit of thirty minutes.

Criteria of success: The student will make no serious errors in English. He will correctly make nine out of ten adjustments necessitated by structural differences between the languages. He will make no more than three errors in interpreting idioms. He will not make more than three serious vocabulary errors.

It should be clear that the complement and conditions spell out quite succinctly what method must be followed to achieve the objective. If the teacher who draws up such a behavioral objective is intent upon inducing this behavior under the given conditions, he will provide adequate training experience to make its achievement possible. Not only the teacher, but any trained observer should be able to determine whether or not the objective has been achieved by the student. The success or failure of any program should be judged, of course, by the degree to which it achieves the realistic objectives it has set up for itself.

Probably most foreign language teachers today would not specify the above objective. In the past twenty years new methods of teaching have appeared, based largely on the results of research in learning theory and linguistics, which suggest that translation per se is not a worthy objective for the early levels of language learning. For a teacher who accepts this, the objective specified above will simply not exist. For him it is in the nature of a non-objective. Instead, the teacher may specify the following as one of his chief objectives:

Behavior: The student will listen attentively...

Complement: ...to a fifteen minute reading of any moderately difficult material excluding that of a technical or abstract nature, and excluding unusual structure and vocabulary, but including structure and vocabulary of common occurrence...

Conditions: ...read at normal speed by a native speaker of either sex and any age using a standard variety of the language; the learner to be informed that he may take notes during the reading.

Criteria of success: The student will be able to answer orally, promptly, and correctly both as to form and content eight out of ten questions asked about the reading. His control of the sound system, rhythm, and intonation will be acceptable to a native speaker.

It will be noted that the objective encompasses the ability to understand the normal, standard speech of native speakers of either sex and any age. This implies that the training period will provide ample opportunity for listening to the speech of a great variety of native speakers while focusing on the achievement of the objective. This, obviously, is the method. The objective must work throughout the training period as a cause, and not merely as an outcome. Routine, aimless activity of a take-it-or-leave-it, casual nature, in which neither teacher nor learner is acutely conscious of the teleology involved must be without significant result for most learners.

Let me give you a somewhat different use to which I can visualize behavioral objectives being put to improve instruction.

One of our teachers has been testing out his ideas, new techniques, and a teaching device with an experimental Spanish program involving 45-50 students in two sections in one high school.

A chief objective, if not the chief objective, appears to be to bring students to a higher degree of unstudied fluency in speaking than is achieved in regular programs. I call the objective unstudied fluency to distinguish what appear to be his aims from the studied sort of fluency that individuals sometimes acquire very quickly, and from the functional fluency that usually comes only after much study and practice. As you know, some people deny that functional fluency can be acquired in the academic setting alone. My understanding of the teacher's objective, I hasten to emphasize, is my own, and may not accord fully with his.

It seems to me that he is aiming for an ability to converse which is immediate, automatic, broadly selective as far as structure and vocabulary are concerned, but, naturally, limited--limited because of inexperience; implying ability to speak freely, however, within those limitations, and not limited because of inadequacy of skill development. Thus he attempts to avoid the restrictions of dialog patterning, and focuses on the demands of the given situation. The theory is that the system and the device speed up the acquisition of fluency.

The specification of behavioral objectives would seem to be a great aid to him in his investigation of the possibilities of his system.

I am not speaking for him here, but attempting to interpret possibilities. I should think that he could analyze the steps that an individual takes on the way to fluency. He already has done much of this. He could attempt to estimate how long it takes for the average student, or the average class, to conclude the process of making the distinguishable steps. He might determine, for example, that it normally takes about 20 hours to reach a certain degree of proficiency using one of the regular programs; another 25 hours for the accomplishment of the second step, etc. He might make a hypothesis that due to the concentration of stimulus-response activity and a somewhat different focus, several steps are compressed or by-passed in his system, requiring only 30 hours to conclude a decisive step, which normally requires 50 hours, let's say. This step would become an objective, stated precisely as to the behavior to be observed, the conditions to be imposed, and the criteria for success to be employed. The objective becomes a check-point on the way to the larger objective, fluency. At the end of the 30th hour, evaluating behavior for achievement of the objective, he would be in a position to decide that the total effort had or had not made the kind of progress toward the goal which had been envisioned. The precise meaning of this, and what remedial action to take, would await his careful analysis.

I'm sure everyone realizes that objectives are structured into good textbooks, and behavioral objectives are structured into the new integrated programs by their authors. At one time it was thought, naively, that a well-structured program would be teacher-proof--that it would teach behavioral objectives and help students achieve them whether or not the teacher was competent, and whether or not the teacher recognized the objectives. We know that this simply isn't so. Teachers and programs can work at cross-purposes, and the achievement of objectives can be cancelled out by confused and conflicting means. If the teacher is unaware of the behavioral objectives built into a program, the chances of their being reached are greatly reduced.

Undoubtedly, many teachers assume that the writing of behavioral objectives must be an enormous and tricky task, involving the specification of literally thousands of minute objectives for each course. I am quite sure that this assumption is false.

If you will examine Rebecca Valette's Modern Language Testing (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), you will find a rich variety of testing techniques designed to measure the achievement of the new objectives of foreign language instruction. A judicious sampling, I believe, could yield a wise choice of compatible behavioral objectives, sufficiently few in number to serve the causal purpose mentioned above in the management of learning activities. I would not be surprised if doing this would not make A-LM, Entender y Hablar, etc. more satisfying as teaching materials, and permit us to get off the musical chairs.

The careful, limited, but clear-cut specification of behavioral objectives affords an opportunity for continuous, systematic readjustment of the means necessary to attain them. I repeat: I see behavioral objectives not only as the ends of learning activities, but as causes of them. The existence of a stated objective permits the periodic readjustment of the objective itself, too, if that seems warranted.

So far I have spoken of behavioral objectives only as they relate to one of the several new thrusts in the school reform movement, namely, course content revision. While this is where we must start, and we start from behind, it is not where we must end. But it is about here that I must end, with only one last comment.

I think there is going to be a battle of relevance fought in the public schools, hinging upon whether or not a given body of knowledge or set of skill-learnings can accommodate the demands of individualized instruction. Individualized instruction draws its strength and insistence from the demands for a true equalizing of educational opportunity. We are no longer in a position of inculpable ignorance concerning learner variability. We know a great deal about the learning aptitudes of learners. We know that inability to learn a language one way does not mean inability to learn a language another way. We have the means at our disposal to individualize instruction to meet those objectives which are within the reach of different kinds of learners. The specification of objectives which meet the needs and capabilities of individuals would be of inestimable value in helping us manage individualized instruction.

But first, we must, I think, make a beginning of writing a few significant, compatible behavioral objectives to explore their potentiality in the improvement of instruction until we get in the habit of thinking this way.

FORUM

Published quarterly by the Department of Romance Languages
of the University of Arizona as a service to the foreign
language teachers of the State

Editors
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Vol. XVI, No. 2 Tucson, Arizona 85721 January, 1969

The FORUM cooperates in the Foreign Language Program
of the Modern Language Association of America